

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES COUNCIL OF LEON COUNTY

Developed by the Leon County

Children's Services Council Planning Committee

DRAFT REPORT

November 2019

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners created the Leon County Children's Services Council (CSC) Planning Committee (hereafter referred to as the Planning Committee) to develop recommendations for the establishment of the Children's Services Council of Leon County. The Planning Committee was convened September 2018 and tasked to complete their deliberations and provide a final report in December 2019. This report documents the work of the Planning Committee and provides a set of recommendations to guide a CSC of Leon County Board and Executive Director if approved by the voters of Leon County.

BACKGROUND

Overview of Children's Services Councils in Florida

Section 125.901, Florida Statutes provides counties with the authority to create an independent special district by ordinance with taxing authority for the purpose of providing funding for children's services throughout the county upon approval of local electorate. If approved, the special taxing district has the authority to levy ad valorem taxes not to exceed the maximum of 0.5 mils.¹ There are currently nine Florida counties with independent special taxing districts for children's services: Alachua, Broward, Hillsborough, Martin, Miami-Dade, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and St. Lucie. The Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County is the oldest, established in 1945, and The Children's Trust of Alachua is the youngest, approved in November 2018.

¹ Two counties with CSCs (Palm Beach and Pinellas) are approved by special act of the Florida Legislature to levy up to 1.0 mils.

Once approved by voters and board members are appointed, CSCs are required to identify and assess the needs of children in their respective counties and submit to the governing body of each county a written description of:

- a) The activities, services, and opportunities that will be provided to children
- b) The anticipated schedule for providing those activities, services, and opportunities
- c) The manner in which children will be served, including a description of arrangements and agreements which will be made with community organizations, state and local educational agencies, federal agencies, public assistance agencies, the juvenile courts, foster care agencies, and other applicable public and private agencies and organizations.
- d) The special outreach efforts that will be undertaken to provide services to at-risk, abused, or neglected children.
- e) The manner in which the council will seek and provide funding for unmet needs.
- f) The strategy which will be used for interagency coordination to maximize existing human and fiscal resources.

The CSC has authority to collect data and to allocate funds to other local agencies providing children's services. The public school system and any agencies under the school system's exclusive jurisdiction are prohibited from receiving CSC funds pursuant to 125.901, F.S. The CSC is also responsible for adopting a millage rate and budget in accordance with the Truth in Millage (TRIM) Act.

Florida's framework for children's services councils has proved to be a successful model for impacting early childhood outcomes – likely due to the evidence-base, reporting, and collaboration requirements as well as the prohibitions against duplication of services and supplanting of funds. Population-level changes in outcomes takes considerable time and effort, but in areas with long-standing councils, positive outcomes have been achieved. For example, the CSC of Martin County funded a breast-feeding coordinator and collaborates to provide nurse home visiting services. As a result, Martin County ranks #1 in the state on infant breastfeeding. Through the work of several family strengthening and afterschool programs, funded by the CSC of St. Lucie County, a 63% reduction in youth alcohol use was documented between 2000-2016. Literacy initiatives in Martin, Broward,

and Miami-Dade Counties are increasing the number of 3rd graders reading proficiently at a faster pace than the state average.²

Overview of Leon County Board of County Commissioners Deliberations

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners began consideration of establishing an independent Children's Services Council district in early 2018. County staff prepared a comprehensive report of child indicator data and services, and on June 19, 2018, the Commission adopted Ordinance No. 2018-13 placing the referendum on the ballot for the November 2020 General Election.

In July 2018, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution to establish an advisory committee, named the Leon County CSC Planning Committee. The Planning Committee was authorized as a decision-making committee (in accordance with Board Policy No. 03-15) for the purpose of developing a plan for the Children's Services Council of Leon County if approved by the voters. The resolution identified a 20-member committee including the Superintendent of Leon County Schools, or his designee; a School Board member, as appointed by the Leon County School Board; the Department of Children and Families District Administrator, or his or her designee; a judge assigned to juvenile cases as appointed by the Chief Judge; a member of the Leon County Board of County Commissioners, as appointed by the full Board; and 15 Leon County residents who represent the demographic diversity of the population of the County. The Planning Committee was tasked to complete the plan by December 31, 2019, with dissolution of the committee upon submission of the report.

Our Kids First, a political committee formed to support establishment of a Children's Services Council in Leon County, made a set of recommendations for the operation of the Planning Committee. These recommendations included a proposed staffing plan, membership, meeting schedule, and scope of work. Commissioners designated a budget for staffing of the Planning Committee, and three consultants expressed interest in the project. A joint proposal from the consultants was submitted and accepted based on the outlined work plan. Proposed members of the Planning Committee were contacted and agreed to

² M. Guse & A. Jones (2019) *Florida children's council*. Presentation to the Planning Committee (March 8, 2019).

participate. The Planning Committee voted to include one additional member representing private business based on public input (see Appendix A for a list of Planning Committee members). Meetings of the Planning Committee began in September 2018 (Appendix B contains a list of meeting dates and locations).

Once the CSC Planning Committee was convened, the Committee acted to incorporate several essential elements to ensure transparency of the work of the Planning Committee, engage community partners in the process, and create accountability procedures. These elements included:

- Guiding Operating Principles of the Leon County CSC Planning Committee (see Appendix C)
- Planning Committee Purpose Statement (see Appendix D)
- Development and launch of the Planning Committee website (<https://LeonCSC.bookmark.com/>)
- Email listserv with sign up opportunity provided on the website
- Email listserv distribution of meeting notices to an extensive list of media and stakeholder contacts
- Detailed Plan of Work and Progress Reports, posted on the website
- Detailed minutes of each meeting, posted on the website
- Dedicated time on the agenda for public comment at every meeting
- Public participation in workgroup discussions and efforts to identify community priorities, vision, and mission.

ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY NEEDS AND RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

The Planning Committee established a comprehensive set of priorities along with a proposed vision and mission for the CSC. The first step in this process was a comprehensive assessment of community needs. The committee began by reviewing data collected by the Leon County Board of County Commissioners staff, with additional data gathered by Planning Committee staff, in four key areas of community health: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. In addition, the Planning Committee reviewed data and information presented by community organizations regarding unmet needs and gaps in services. The committee also reviewed data and information collected by

community coordinating partners (i.e., United Partners for Human Services, United Way of the Big Bend, and Whole Child Leon). Based on this review of community needs, the Planning Committee created recommendations for the vision, mission, and priorities of the CSC of Leon County.

Identification of Priority Needs in the Community

In considering its priorities, the Planning Committee was guided by the statutory goals of *efficiently addressing unmet needs within the Leon County community, ensuring no duplication of services, no supplanting of funds, and maximizing funds toward needed services*. The phrase, “unmet need,” suggests areas that are not being addressed by current providers. Specifically, it suggests that the CSC of Leon County should focus on programs and activities that are not already in existence within the community and avoid funding programs similar to current ones. This reflects a logical concern regarding potential duplication of services and might suggest, for example, that no new after-school program funding should be provided since multiple-after school programs already exist in the county.

While this approach appears logical, it could reduce the ability of the CSC of Leon County to address critical problems in the community. For example, a new after-school program might produce better outcomes than the current options and thus be an appropriate investment for the CSC of Leon County. It is also possible that the current program might not meet all community demand for their services. Accordingly, the Planning Committee defined unmet needs as those community outcomes that are either notably worse than the state average or are objectively poor regardless of the state average. Table 1 lists the four areas of community health examined by the Leon County Commission and by the Planning Committee. In some areas, such as education, Leon County tends to be at or above the state average. In other areas, particularly those related to family and community, Leon County tends to rank low within the state. Furthermore, in many cases, Florida ranks low nationally which suggests that even ranking well within the state may still indicate poor community outcomes.

Table I. Summary of Leon County's Rank on Key Indicators of Community Health

	Match or Exceeds State Average	Leon County Rank Among All 67 Counties	State of Florida Rank Among All 50 States
Economic Well-being	8 of 11	21	45
Education	12 of 12	4	31
Health	5 of 14	32	44
Family & Community	7 of 14	53	35
Aggregate Ranking	na	10	40

Review of Data from Leon County Board of County Commissioners and Staff

Community outcomes data served as the foundation for considering needs and potential priorities. The Planning Committee engaged in a multi-step process to review an extensive array of data, hear input from community stakeholders, and ultimately identify recommended priorities.

- At the January 2019 meeting, the committee reviewed:
 - Results of polling conducted in Leon county regarding public perception of needs, and
 - Summary information about where Leon County ranks on a range of indicators related to economic well-being, education, health, and family and community (see Table 1 above and Appendix E for more details).
- At the March 2019 meeting, the committee engaged in a detailed discussion of the data related to community needs.
 - The committee broke up into small groups organized around the topic areas from the January meeting (i.e. economic well-being, education, health, and family and community).
 - Each small group reviewed the detailed data provided for their area. This information included the prior summary information but also original sources for the county rankings. Members of the public were allowed to sit with and observe the discussions.
 - The group members used the detailed reports to recommend potential priorities for the CSC of Leon County.

- Each small group reported their recommended priorities.
- At the June 2019 meeting, the committee reviewed the draft mission, goals, and priorities developed by staff using the priorities recommended during the March meeting.
- The priorities were revisited and revised at the September 2019 meeting.

Review of Information Presented by Community Organizations

As part of the June discussions regarding the proposed priorities, the Planning Committee noted the importance of hearing from the service provider community. Staff was directed to develop an on-line survey to collect data on unmet needs and gaps in services from community organizations providing children's services. Organizations completing the survey were also invited to orally present their data and recommendations for priorities before the Planning Committee at the July 12, 2019 meeting. United Partners for Human Services, United Way of the Big Bend, and Whole Child Leon assisted with distribution of the survey.

Thirty-three community organizations responded to the survey, and Appendix F contains the responses received. Of the 30 organizations, ten ask to address the Planning Committee. Appendix F also contains an overview of the comments of those organizations addressing the Planning Committee at the July 12, 2019 meeting.

Identification of Priority Areas

The process followed by the Planning Committee was intentionally designed to highlight potential unmet needs without regard to the current portfolio of programs in the community. The review of data focused on those outcome areas where Leon County ranks relatively low on a state or national basis. Extensive public comment was solicited to identify any other unmet needs. The result was the identification of three general priority areas:

1. Success in school and life
2. Healthy children and families
3. Stable and nurturing families and communities

Key metrics were identified by the Planning Committee, divided into the three broad areas, and are provided in Table II.

Table II. Selected Indicators of Community Health

Measure	Leon	State
Success in School and Life		
Percentage of child care programs that are Gold Seal (FL measurement of quality)	12%	28%
Healthy Children and Families		
Percentage of low birth-weight babies	9.3%	8.7%
Infant deaths per 1000 live births	6.6	6.1
Children experiencing child abuse per 100,000	383	513
Deaths ages 5-9 per 100,000	17.8	13.2
Bacterial STDs ages 15-19 per 100,000	4,085	2,265
Substance abuse (multiple substance measures such as alcohol, marijuana, and amphetamines)	NA	NA
Stable and Nurturing Families and Communities		
Percentage of total arrests under age 18	10.8%	7.9%
School-related arrests	19%	15%
Rate of food insecurity	21.1%	13.9%

Breadth and Focus of Proposed Priorities

The Planning Committee considered the extent to which priorities should be broad or narrow in focus. Narrowly focused priorities have the advantage of being more explicit, and thus, are more likely to indicate to the county's voters what specific types of programs are likely to be funded. Narrowly focused priorities, however, constrain the flexibility of the CSC of Leon County. For example, the first priority is related to school readiness. An example of a narrowly focused priority might be "increase the percentage of school readiness programs that are accredited by a national accrediting body," paired with a specific outcome measure, such as "increase the percentage of nationally accredited school readiness programs by 20%." This example provides a clear indication of the types of programs that are likely to be funded.

The Planning Committee recommends a more general set of priorities. Narrowly focused priorities limit the ability of the CSC of Leon County to address related factors. In the case of school readiness, the narrow construction of the priorities to focus on something like national accreditation could potentially exclude programs that address other factors that nevertheless contribute to school readiness. For example, committee members noted that children experiencing adverse childhood events (ACEs) often struggle in early childhood programs, and trauma-informed training and technical assistance can be an effective approach to support increased school readiness for these children.

The Planning Committee also considered developing recommendations for outcome measures tied to the priorities. Members were in agreement that the CSC of Leon County should set benchmarks and outcome measures; however, the Planning Committee did not develop recommendations for these metrics due to two concerns. First, the committee agreed that it is not in a good position to establish precise benchmarks. In examples from other CSCs across Florida, establishing meaningful benchmarks takes extensive data collection, community input, and deliberations. In the case of school readiness, for example, should the benchmark be 80% of Leon County children enter school ready or a higher or lower percentage? Answering that question should involve the CSC of Leon County Board, its Executive Director, and key community stakeholders. Moreover, some members were concerned that establishing specific measures, such as the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener, exceeded the role of the Planning Committee and infringed on the role of the CSC of Leon County Board and Executive Director.

Based on these issues and concerns, the Planning Committee developed recommendations for general priorities that address a range of needs in Leon County as opposed to more specific, focused priorities. This decision was made to ensure the priorities are broad enough to encourage funding of a range of potential programs while specific enough to reflect the critical needs identified during the planning process. For example, the recommended priority for school readiness is “increase the number of children that enter kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically ready.” This language intentionally allows the CSC of Leon County to consider a range of programs that improve school readiness and to potentially establish a range of metrics to measure progress.

RECOMMENDATION I. Vision, Mission, Goals, and Priorities

VISION

All children in Leon County enter school ready to learn, are successful in school, and become productive citizens.

MISSION

Strategically supporting evidenced-based programs and services to improve the safety, health, and security of Leon County's children and families.

GOALS

Success in School and Life

School Readiness

Increase the number of children that enter kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically ready.

School-Age Supports

Increase school performance and reduce juvenile crime among school-age children.

Healthy Children and Families

Physical Health

Reduce infant and maternal mortality, increase infant health, improve oral health, and improve early identification of health problems.

Mental Health

Increase resiliency and reduce the number and consequences of adverse childhood events.

Stable and Nurturing Families and Community

Youth Development

Build occupational skills and increase economic opportunities.

Providing Food Stability

Reduce the consequences of food insecurity by ensuring that children in Leon County have adequate year-round access to healthy food.

SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting evidence-based programs

Florida Statutes emphasize the need for data and evidence of effectiveness to play a significant role in the allocation of funds by children's services councils. A strong focus on supporting programs that have and can produce evidence of effectiveness is one way the CSC of Leon County can demonstrate a positive return on investment. Return on investment is a measure of outcomes achieved relative to costs incurred. Using this lens optimizes investments in community programs, encourages community partners to focus on high-leverage programs, and ensures accountability to the county's taxpayers.³

A focus on return on investment requires establishing and tracking key metrics of performance. Although there are potentially hundreds of metrics that could be used by a CSC, selecting too many may create contradictions, provide unclear results, and limit outcomes and impact. As already noted, the Planning Committee reviewed a number of potential metrics and agreed that the CSC of Leon County should review and select a relatively small number of indicators, establish baseline performance levels, and track and report publicly on progress. An annual report is required in Florida Statutes. In addition, a website dashboard is recommended to track ongoing progress on indicators in Leon County.

RECOMMENDATION II: Key Measures and Metrics

Establish and regularly report on a limited number of key metrics aligned to the vision, mission, goals, and priorities of the CSC of Leon County. Examples could include, but are not limited to, kindergarten readiness rates, maternal and infant mortality, juvenile crime, and rates of food insecurity.

Once metrics are established, the CSC of Leon County must develop processes and practices to fund programs that have or can produce evidence of effectiveness, demonstrating indicator progress. Funding such programs can be challenging. The Planning Committee solicited input from other CSCs on their approaches to evidence-based programming. The committee received testimony from two current and one retired

³ The Heckman Foundation is a resource incorporating return on investment into funding early childhood programs (<https://heckmanfoundation.org/>).

Executive Directors (EDs) regarding how they incorporated data and evidence in the work of their CSCs. The directors noted that evidence can play a significant role in renewing programs but has a more limited role in initially funding a service provider. The committee also solicited written input from CSCs on a range of issues, including data and accountability. Responses are provided in Appendix G.

CSCs and service providers face multiple limitations when trying to enact evidence-based practices. First, the term evidence itself has multiple definitions and is best understood on a continuum with increasing confidence that a program is likely to achieve its desired outcomes. Second, assuming a relatively high standard for evidence (see below for more on this), there is a very limited number of programs that have been rigorously tested and have successfully demonstrated that they are effective. Third, many providers are simply not in a position to provide clear evidence of past effectiveness.

Defining evidence-based programs and practices

There is no single definition of what it means for a program, practice, or policy to be evidence-based. The phrase is commonly used to reflect that there is published research supporting a given program, preferably in a peer-reviewed journal. Such publication, however, may be insufficient or incomplete, depending on the CSC's goals.

There are many other issues to consider when thinking about what constitutes evidence of effectiveness. How many publications showing program effectiveness are needed to qualify as evidence-based? How large of an effect is needed to demonstrate progress? If the program's benefits are positive, but small, is that sufficient? How should contradictory results be handled if some studies show positive benefits while others show no benefit or even negative outcomes? How closely should the study population and setting match the proposed population and setting? How does the design of the study (i.e., is it experimental or not) factor into the decision?

To help address these questions, staff presented the Planning Committee with one framework for understanding the standards required for research to provide evidence of effectiveness. The framework that was presented is based on criteria used in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and by the *What Works Clearinghouse* which evaluates the effectiveness of educational programs for the U.S. Department of Education. These standards were designed to help school districts identify evidence-based programs that

could be supported by federal funds, reflecting a goal similar to that of the evidence-based expectations for CSCs in Florida Statutes.

ESSA has four tiers of evidence ranging from programs that have a theoretical foundation for why they should work but have little or no objective evidence to those that have demonstrated effectiveness through rigorous analyses. The concept of a continuum of evidence is critical. While any given study can provide evidence supporting a program, some studies provide stronger evidence than others. Thus, there is a need for the CSC of Leon County to adopt an understanding of evidence that takes into account this variation. The levels shared by staff with the Planning Committee are:

1. Strong evidence that is based on at least one well-designed and implemented experimental study
2. Moderate evidence that is based on a least one well-design and implemented quasi-experimental study.
3. Promising evidence that is based on correlational studies using statistical controls.
4. Programs that demonstrate a rationale based on a logic model or theory of action.

Within each tier there can be even more detailed requirements. The requirements for Strong Evidence, for example, include at least one significant favorable effect on the relevant outcome, no overriding negative effects from causal studies, and a sample that is large and overlaps with the population of interest. Few programs reach that top tier, in part because there are very limited resources for conducting experimental studies, and many studies that are conducted do not meet the additional criteria.

It is important to note that different research fields use different criteria that are suited to their particular research needs, resulting in multiple standards and criteria for defining what is and is not evidence-based. However, regardless of the field, the basic concepts remain similar: there are different criteria for what constitutes evidence, and this leads to different tiers or levels of evidence. While one model was presented by staff, the CSC of Leon County Board and its Executive Director should consider this issue and select a standard of evidence for Leon County.⁴

⁴ One valuable resource is *The Journey to Evidence-Based Programming* produced by the CSC of Palm Beach County (<http://www.cscpb.org>).

RECOMMENDATION III: Evidence-based Standards

The CSC of Leon County should adopt a formal framework establishing a continuum of evidence-based standards that can be used for program training, funding and accountability.

Selecting Programs and Activities

A CSC can use a combination of approaches to identify and select programs for its community. One option is for the CSC to identify the evidence-based program it wants implemented to address an established priority area, and then conduct a request for proposals (RFP) to select a provider. For example, various nurse home visiting programs have demonstrated effectiveness at producing a range of positive outcomes, including reduced instances of low-birth weight, reduced crime, and improved academic outcomes. The CSC could select a nurse home visiting program based on that research and solicit bids to implement the program in its community. Such an RFP would focus on the ability of the applicant to implement the program with fidelity, manage costs, and monitor performance and outcomes. This approach works best when there is a strong alignment between priority outcomes and existing programs that have demonstrated effectiveness.

A different approach is for the CSC to develop a RFP that identifies the priorities it wishes to see addressed and accept bids wherein the provider proposes a program to implement aligned to the priorities. Most often this will be a program already in use by the provider, but it could also be one that the provider develops or purchases. Either way, some of the proposed programs may have limited evidence of effectiveness. There are ways, however, to design such an RFP, with a focus on program accountability and monitoring, to increase the likelihood of funding a successful program.

Funding Programs Based on Evidence

If CSCs limit their investments to programs that meet a rigorous definition of evidence-based practices, there will be very few potential programs to support and many priority areas will not be addressed due to the lack of program options. Instead, CSCs must develop policies and practices to work with programs where the level of evidence is lower or very limited while at the same time providing assurances to their communities that

resources are not wasted. Lessons learned from the EDs of other CSCs can help address this challenge.

To begin, the CSC of Leon County should prioritize evidence and existing research whenever possible. The default expectation for an applicant should be that they provide research suggesting their program is likely to generate benefits for the Leon County community. As noted previously, that level of evidence may vary. Programs with stronger levels of evidence should be prioritized in the funding process.

The RFP should require that the applicant provide examples of research and/or data analyses that demonstrate evidence of a program's effectiveness. Significant variations in how this requirement is demonstrated should be expected (e.g., lower tiers of evidence, lack of data matching the targeted population, research based on small-scale or laboratory implementation). The review process must include clear evaluation metrics and protocols, reviewer training, and staff and/or external partner reviewers that can critically evaluate the level of the supporting evidence. In other words, providing supporting evidence is not a checkbox for yes or no but a critical consideration of the extent to which the evidence actually supports the application.

The RFP process, however, must allow for programs that have little or no initial evidence. This is a necessity for at least two reasons. First, it is likely that the many of the potential applicants will have limited evidence of program effectiveness, and restricting funding to only programs with strong evidence will dramatically limit the priorities that can be addressed. Second, new programs may be developed that are worth testing within the community. For these cases, the RFP should require a logic model that clearly describes the theory of action for the program, shows the relationships between the funding and activities, and identifies the expected outcomes. Given that these programs may be more speculative, the CSC may wish to limit the number of them and/or limit the size of the awards. For example, other CSCs have issued demonstration grants that are smaller but allow providers to test out a program on a smaller scale before expanding.

Regardless of the initial evidence base, all programs funded by the CSC of Leon County should expect providers to collect outcome data and share their results. The RFP process should include a strong accountability system that includes some level of program evaluation. It is not possible for every, or even most, programs to be implemented in an experimental fashion, but programs should be required to collect outcome data that go

beyond simple counts of people served. For example, an after-school program that seeks to reduce crime rates and increase school performance should collect information from its participants on police interactions and arrests and information on school activities such as absences. These findings could then be compared to similar students for evidence of effectiveness.

These types of requirements necessitate having CSC staff or external partners that can assess the evaluation plan, assist with improving it, and support its implementation. Some programs may require data from external organizations, such as the school district, to conduct a reasonable evaluation. In other cases, the provider may simply lack the staff necessary. The CSC staff and partners will likely need to support many applicants to ensure data and outcomes are tracked.

RECOMMENDATION IV. Demonstrating Effectiveness

The CSC of Leon County should adopt an RFP process that prioritizes evidence-based programs but also includes opportunities for programs to demonstrate effectiveness. The RFP scoring categories should include, but not be limited to logic model and theory of action, evidence-base for the program, implementation plan, evaluation plan, and research design.

Increasing Capacity for Collecting and Using Evidence in the Provider Community

One goal of the CSC of Leon County should be to increase the ability of the provider community to use and collect evidence of program effectiveness. During their presentations to the Planning Committee, current and former Executive Directors shared a number of ways they addressed this challenge. The Executive Directors invested considerable time and effort to build the capacity of the non-profit organizations in their counties to generate and utilize evidence in their programming decisions. Specifically, the CSCs engaged in training and technical assistance efforts focused on helping local non-profits develop outcome measures, understand how to collect and report on data, implement evaluation plans, and more.

In addition, the EDs noted that their contracts permit recipient organizations to spend funds on administrative activities. While the goal of any non-profit is to keep administrative costs low, provider organizations must have the capacity to closely monitor

their services; collect, analyze, and share outcome data; and use this information to continually adjust and improve their services. This can necessitate providers either providing training for staff, hiring additional staff with the specific requisite skills, or sub-contracting. Regardless of approach, the EDs collectively noted that providers with insufficient administrative resources were less likely to be successful.

There are similar implications for CSC staffing and contracting. The EDs emphasized the need for each CSC to hire and train their own staff or subcontractors to support and oversee evidence-based processes, including RFP proposal development aligned to accountability mechanisms, fiscal and programmatic monitoring, and data analysis. The EDs emphasized that putting these policies and supports into practice will result in discontinued funding for programs that cannot or will not provide evidence when they are implemented.

RECOMMENDATION V: Monitoring and Evaluation of Funded Programs

The CSC of Leon County should ensure that it has the capacity to monitor program implementation and evaluate programmatic outcomes. This capacity may be achieved through internal staff or subcontracting.

PROPOSED BYLAWS, RULES, AND REGULATIONS

Chapter 125.901 of Florida Statutes governs the creation and operation of CSCs. CSCs operate with multiple levels of accountability and are subject to the same rules and requirements that apply to city and county governments. The first CSC was approved in Pinellas County in 1946, and nearly 40 years later the citizens in Palm Beach County established the second CSC in Florida. There is a rich history of good practices and established policies and procedures that Leon County can pull from to develop their own.

The Florida Children's Council is an association of Children's Services Councils statewide and has worked with this committee to provide support and resources to assist with efforts in Leon County. One of their goals is to promote best practices and professional standards for existing CSCs and to support the development of potential Councils. In that spirit, they facilitated the presentations of three Executive Directors of CSC's from Martin, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie Counties before this Committee. In addition, they provided an extensive data base of frequently asked questions from all the CSCs statewide for the

committee's review. With this information, the committee felt it prudent to recommend the CSC of Leon County utilize the existing resources in developing their own bylaws, policies, and procedures that are consistent with federal, state, and local laws and ordinances.

RECOMMENDATION VI: Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

The CSC of Leon County should utilize the draft by-laws provided, based on examples from well-established CSCs, as a starting point for the development of its own bylaws. In addition to the bylaws, policies should also be developed in the following areas:

- CSC/Agency-related Guiding Principle
 - Racial and Ethnic Equity Impact Statement
 - Nepotism
 - Procurement
 - Public Comment
 - Financial/Audit
 - Employee Handbook/Human Resources
 - Investment Policy
 - Fund Balance
 - Late Submission
 - Failing to Properly Screen (background screening)
- (See Appendix H for draft bylaws and policy examples)

ORGANIZATIONAL LAUNCH

Organizational Size and Composition

Florida Statutes, 125.901(1)(a) and (b), outlines the membership requirements for children's services councils as either a 10-member body or a 33-member body. For the 10-member board, the statute mandates five members. These include the superintendent of schools, a school board member, the district administrator of the corresponding Department of Children and Families district, one member of the county governing body, and a judge assigned to juvenile cases. The Governor appoints the remaining five members, representing the demographic diversity of the county population. According to the statute, the county governing body, after seeking public input, must submit at least three names for each vacancy.

Among the children's services councils in other areas of the state, all but one has a council of 10 members. The Children's Trust of Miami is the exception with a 33-member board. The Children's Trust of Alachua, approved by voters in November 2018, is awaiting Governor appointments. In order to maximizing their planning opportunities, all 15 of the individuals submitted for member consideration to the Governor are attending council meetings with the five members that were designated in statute and immediately seated.

RECOMMENDATION VII: Board Size

A board of 10 members is recommended for the CSC of Leon County. The Planning Committee also suggests adoption of the process utilized in Alachua County for including all potential appointees in council meetings until Governor appointments are announced.

Funding Parameters

Florida Statutes, 125.901(3), requires each independent children's services council, approved by voter referendum, to "prepare a tentative annual written budget of the district's expected income and expenditures, including a contingency fund" by July 1st of each year. The statute also establishes a maximum millage rate of 0.5 mills. A 0.5 mill rate would generate approximately \$8.0 million annually in Leon County. The council will be responsible for computing a proposed millage rate and fixing a final rate. If approved by the voters in November 2020, the CSC of Leon County will not begin receiving tax dollars until November or December of 2021.

Several children's services councils in other areas of the state utilized loans from their respective county governments to enable the council to meet statutory requirements and begin operations the first year prior to tax receipts. These funds were utilized for hiring staff, holding Board meetings, and other office costs necessary to meet statutory responsibilities. The Leon County Board of County Commissioners, in deliberations regarding placing the children's services council referendum on the 2020 General Election ballot, considered the first-year funding issues. At their May 23, 2018 meeting, staff recommended that the County provide a loan (estimated at approximately \$150,000) and some in-kind staffing support if the voters approve the referendum.

RECOMMENDATION VIII: First Year Funding Support

The CSC of Leon County should enter into an inter-local loan agreement with Leon County or another local organization or entity to enable funding and support for staffing and necessary operations during the first year.

YEAR ONE AND YEAR TWO ACTIVITIES

As noted in this report, the experience of CSCs in other counties in Florida informed much of the work of the Planning Committee. Presentations by two current and one former CSC EDs and by the staff of the Florida Children's Council (the association of CSCs in Florida) as well as the responses of CSC EDs to a wide array of questions were reviewed and considered as part of the work of the Planning Committee and its staff. Their experiences in launching a CSC are important to consider and provide a template for action steps during years one and two of operation.

RECOMMENDATION IX: Year One and Year Two Activities

The CSC of Leon County should undertake the following activities during Year One:

- Hire CEO
- Identify office space, exploring opportunities for office space donations from community partners
- Develop staffing plan, exploring opportunities for year one staffing supports from community partners, particularly legal and accounting services to assist with start-up.
- Procure needed equipment, exploring opportunities for shared equipment with community partners
- Work with County staff to determine the appropriate millage rate for year one
- Conduct needs assessment, utilizing any assessments already completed in the community (including the work of the Planning Committee) and seeking input from stakeholders and residents
- Adopt bylaws, policies and procedures; emphasis on strong fiscal processes and procedures (utilize Government Finance Officers Association best practices as guide)
- Establish committees
- Develop strategic plan, identify priority investment areas, and create allocation timeline, considering a limited grant launch
- Draft competitive solicitations, incorporating accountability requirements
- Develop plan for grant application reviews

- Develop data system and accountability/outcome monitoring plan; consider adoption of Science of Implementation framework to guide system development and implementation

The CSC of Leon County should undertake the following activities during Year Two:

- Implement staffing plan and complete hiring
- Finalize data system requirements
- Launch multi-media communication strategies
- Launch training for community providers
- Launch competitive applications and review process; consider pilot grants for first year of service funding with a focus on operationalizing and adapting policies based on launch
- Award grants
- Implement accountability system, considering compliance, performance, and fiscal monitoring; utilizing a range of review activities such as on-site program observation, facility tours, participant file reviews, data reviews, compliance document reviews, participant interviews, staff interviews, budget analysis, personnel and volunteer records review, financial review and audit

Commencement of Service Delivery Grants

As indicated above, tax receipts will begin in November or December of 2021, at least one year after voter approval. In addition to repayment of the recommended inter-loan, additional operational costs will need to be considered, such as additional staffing, office space, equipment purchases, staff training, needs assessment, fiscal supports, service provider training, and grant implementation costs. Florida Statutes, (2)(b)2, requires that the newly formed Council identify and assess the needs of children within the county.

There have been a variety of approaches by other CSCs across Florida in terms of start-up funding processes and policies. After loan pay-off, some CSCs have moved quickly within the second year, utilizing needs assessment data collected by partner organizations and releasing grant applications for children's services. Some CSCs released a small percentage (e.g., 18%), and others released a significant percentage (e.g., 80%) of funding for service delivery grants during the first full year of funding. The benefit of releasing grant funds quickly is the ability to impact services sooner. The CSC of Martin County chose to wait until the second full year of funding to release grants and fund children's services within the county and reported fiscal and programmatic benefits to waiting. In addition to the ability to set millage rates and release grant applications based on actual dollars in the

bank rather than an approximation, planning proceeded methodically with strong community engagement.

The Planning Committee considered fast-track, moderate, and cautious start-up processes. There were careful deliberations of possible unintended consequences, with committee members acknowledging the impact of their recommendations on the Council once approved and seated by the voters. Members were in agreement that getting funding and services into the community as soon as possible would be prudent. There was also agreement that ultimately the decision for service delivery funding roll-out belongs to the CSC of Leon County Board.

RECOMMENDATION X: Start-up Processes

The CSC of Leon County should adopt a moderate timeline approach to program funding, with some percentage of funding released for service delivery during year two.

COORDINATION, COLLABORATION, AND COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

Supporting Outreach and Service Delivery to At-risk, Hard-to-reach, and Maltreated Children

Florida Statutes underscores the importance of outreach in establishing and operating a CSC and delivering effective services. Requirements include:

- Solicitation of public input regarding the five Governor appointees (F.S., (1)(a))
- Consultation and coordination with other agencies dedicated to the welfare of children to prevent overlapping services (F.S., (2)(a)5)
- Development of agreements with other community organizations (F.S., (2)(b)2. c.)
- Special outreach efforts to provide services to at-risk, abused, or neglected children (F.S., (2)(b)2. d.)
- Interagency coordination to maximize existing human and fiscal resources (F.S., (2)(b)2. f.)

CSCs across the state have strong local relationships with other community organizations that coordinate service delivery to at-risk, hard-to-reach, and maltreated children. Many utilized their partnerships with local United Ways and other entities in conducting needs assessments. Local partners were also integral to planning and

developing coordinated grant applications and preventing duplication of services. Partnerships have also been utilized to provide outcome-based training and supports for service providers.

Strategies for coordination and collaboration in other CSCs were reviewed. They have a variety of intentional arrangements and agreements with community organizations, state and local education agencies, federal agencies, public assistance agencies, juvenile courts and law enforcement, foster care agencies, and other applicable public and private agencies and entities. Strategies vary, but in all cases, intention is provided to make certain that community organizations and providers are informed and engaged in the processes of the council.

The following are a few examples of how three CSCs - Martin, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie – approached coordination and collaboration in their counties. As the CSC of Leon County establishes itself and determines the best approach for partnerships, each of these examples provide good road maps for consideration.

- In Martin County, community organizations are actively involved in the CSC strategic planning process that eventually guides the development of a publication that is shared with the entire community, entitled *The Childhood Collection: A Strategic Assessment for Martin's Future*. Providers, agencies, and other community partners are convened to conduct field testing of the priorities and emerging issues, specifically identifying “What Was Working?” and “What Needs Work?”. Martin is guided by a belief that funding agencies and decision makers working collaboratively to coordinate priorities, funding, research, and results can make measurable differences.
- In Palm Beach County, their approach to coordination and collaboration is more formalized with written guiding principles on children’s services and agency relations (see Appendix I). Their policy includes six principles addressing engagement practices and expectations with their contractors. The first principle states that open and honest communication between the CSC and its contract agencies is critical to an effective relationship. By outlining expectations in writing, these is less left to interpretation.
- The CSC of St. Lucie states in their mission and values, “that effective organizations identify and develop clear and concise organizational values,” and they have

incorporated collaboration and communication into their organizational values.

Here are two statements referencing these values:

- Collaboration – We believe that by fostering effective community partnerships, we broaden and strengthen the services to children and families.
- Communication – We appreciate that open, honest communication – both expressing and listening to ideas – is crucial to accomplishing our mission and establishing an effective work environment.

Whether the CSC of Leon County elects to develop a written policy on coordination and collaboration, incorporates it into their mission and vision, or simply makes it part of doing business, being intentional about addressing coordination, collaboration, and communication seems paramount for its future success. Looking to these counties that have experienced success in making progress on their identified priorities and outcomes, it seems prudent and efficient to use their guidance. At a minimum, close coordination and collaboration with other community service-coordination bodies is highly recommended during the planning process for the CSC of Leon County.

RECOMMENDATION XI: Coordination and Collaboration

The CSC of Leon County is encouraged to adopt the following practices:

- Closely collaborate and coordinate with Leon County non-profit coordinating bodies (e.g., United Partners for Human Services, United Way of the Big Bend, and Whole Child Leon) to develop a coordinated funding framework and service provider outreach and training plans.
- Utilize needs assessments completed by other organizations such as United Way of the Big Ben, Whole Child Leon, and the Health Department.
- Plan and implement coordinated trainings for service providers in order to build program capacity to implement evidence-based trainings, such as Results-based Accountability, Collective Impact, data collection and analysis, leadership development, grant writing, trauma-informed care and professional development to address implicit bias and to build a racially and ethnically diverse system and workforce.
- Utilize County staff or other community partners to assist with staffing functions during the first year (e.g., administrative assistance, attorney access, purchasing and procurement).
- Participate in partner projects, boards, and activities.

Communication Strategies

Florida Statutes ensures that CSCs across the state are answerable to the taxpayers by incorporating community communication and reporting requirements. Regulations require public input into the establishment of a CSC as well as delivery of annual programmatic and fiscal reports. The efforts by CSCs across Florida to ensure community engagement exceed these requirements and were reviewed to develop the following recommendations for communication strategies.

RECOMMENDATION XII: Communication Strategies

The CSC of Leon County should:

- Utilize the first year to engage the community in the needs assessment and process of establishing a CSC
- Be transparent in all activities, providing public notices of meetings and activities and posting all materials on website
- Prepare the community for the influx of resources through training, public education, and outreach
- Include stakeholder input into annual needs assessment process
- Develop structures for parent leaders/residents/community members to be involved in the governance of system of care (e.g., seek input during monitoring, include community members in review teams, encourage public comment at all meetings)
- Develop and distribute a key indicator report and annual report